

## *Writing a Condolence Letter: Seven important elements*

Writing a condolence letter which is caring can be an emotional and trying experience. The seven elements for writing a clear, sympathetic and practical condolence letter are:

1. Acknowledge the loss. Mention the person's name, how you learned of the loss, and your immediate feelings (shock, sadness, dismay, etc.).
2. Express your sympathy. Share sorrow in an honest and sincere fashion. Show care and understanding of how difficult the situation must be. Use the words, "dead" and "died."
3. Note special qualities of the person who died. Reflect on the qualities you valued most in the person who has died and share these in the letter.
4. Recount a memory about the person who died as they are very much valued.
5. Note special qualities of the survivors to remind them the world goes on and due to "their family, friends and others.....etc., that they will make it!!"
6. Offer assistance. Offering help need not be part of a condolence letter, but if offered, it should be kept specific. Keep it to helping with something special as the bereaved often have a hard time making decisions and an open...I will be glad to help...can be hard as the bereaved may not know what to ask help with.
7. Close the letter with a thoughtful word or phrase. Final words in a condolence letter are especially useful. They should reflect your true feelings. Honest expressions of your thoughts and feelings convey best to the bereaved.